

Canberra
August 22, 1957

Dear John: *Howver*

Mrs. Rehovetz (the secretary at Genetics) forwarded a batch of mail just received; I was especially pleased to see the copy of the letter which went forward to Rockefeller, with the implication that Atwood's appointment has passed the gamut of the Executive Committee. I imagine that it will be some time before a formal reply can be expected from Rockefeller, but it seems quite reasonable that they should be agreeable & the sooner we can get the effective go-ahead from the there, the better.

I hope you received our postcard from Fiji: I asked Dr. Edmonds to post it.

As you can imagine, we've had a rather busy time, especially since arriving here in Canberra on Monday. I'd hardly imagined they could stand the sound of my voice for as many occasions as I've had to talk. But it's been quite a provocative experience.

The John Curtin School of Medical Research is my principal contact site— it's a branch of the Australian National University here, and is entirely a post-graduate research institution, though they have a modicum of Ph.D. students. There are no formal courses at all, at least not in the medical school. Canberra has only about 30,000 inhabitants (and is only slightly reminiscent of Oak Ridge, although a government town being quite solidly built, where it is at all); there is nothing like adequate clinical material for undergraduate medical training, and there are no clinical departments at all (there being Microbiology, Biochemistry, Experimental Pathology and Physiology at present). They have a magnificent new building, only part of which is occupied at present.

Professor Fenner (Microbiology) is one of the best people here (or anywhere in his field). I've learned more recent advance in virology from talking with him, and his associate, Dr. Fazekas de St. Groth (yes a Hungarian) in a few hours than in many a day. He's best known for his part in National Myxomatosis experiment, and is doing a workmanlike job in analysing the steady evolution of both the virus and the host to a less zoocidal equilibrium. He also has some very exciting stuff on

recombinational genetics in the vaccinia and other pox-viruses. Although he and Burnet have pioneered in the genetics of viruses there has been a rather small place for Genetics in the University faculties-- the only full chair, at present, being filled rather unexcitingly (a propos medical genetics) at Adelaide. However, many Australian scientists seem to deplore this as an evident gap and would like to open up the subject, and are discouraged in part by the shortage of qualified candidates for professorships. There is a great deal of interest in joining a Medical Genetics department at A.N.U. here, this having in fact been one of Burnet's strong proposals at the beginning, and Fenner and others were quite interested in the character of our development, which they would probably parallel rather closely when the opportunity develops, which it may well do in the reasonably near future.

Fenner is leaving fairly soon for a trip to the U.K. and U.S. and might be passing through Madison in mid-November. I have assured him he would be quite welcome to stop over if he could, even should we not have returned by then. I am sure you will find considerable enthusiasm for such a visit among our medical and veterinary virologists. I will see what I can arrange from this end; & will take for granted we can scrape up as much as \$50 for an honorarium, if he can schedule a stopover and a talk.

Canberra also houses the CSIRO headquarters, and there is a fairly large genetics group here, mostly oriented towards plant improvement, but at a rather fundamental level. For example, one chap here has a rather unique project on biochemical mutations in a higher plant, which he grows in test-tubes. This has been fairly strenuous, and we are looking forward to thisweekend at

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Bowers

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Dear John:

P.S. to my airletter this A.M.

Fenner and I have been discussing Medical Genetics a bit further, and he is in the course of preparing a memorandum for the A.N.U. administration.

Could you do us the following favor-- to send him a copy of the syllabus and the other preliminary prospective material that I drafted last year? You should have the original in your file; I wouldn't know how to describe where my own copies are located. It is provocative how close our thinking has been on the aims of such a project: perhaps we are all strongly influenced by Burnet's line of interest. Thanks.

Hastily,

Joshua Lederberg.

P.S. Would you be able to pass the following message on to Duarde Walker in Med, Micro. or to Bob Hansen in Vet Sci? Fenner will be between Chicago and Twin Cities on November 18 & unless his schedule is altered could spend most of the day in Madison. If I've not returned by then and they would like to have him talk, they can contact him c/o Dubos in New York between October 9-24. (He's leaving here in about 2 weeks.) The chances are about even that we might be back by then, but even if not I'm sure there are quite a few people on campus who'd want to see him.